

782 preside over a whole district and are known as
 793 lyngdsh rangdsh (head sacrificer), are not
 sacrificers by profession. Thus, for example,
 the chief sacrificer of Lamin in the district
 of War is a coolie by trade and carries loads
 from one market to the other (Fig.1).¹ None of
 these sacrificers has a revered position among
 the people. It is rather the "fear" of them
 which makes them respected. For the Khasi
 firmly believe that the lyngdsh or even merely
 the ordinary sacrificers are masters over the
 (evil) spirits. Therefore they are very careful
 not to quarrel with the sacrificers, so that they
 will not conjure up spirits in their anger and
 set them on the guilty one and thus bring him to
 destruction.

782 The sacrificers are not actually sacrificers
 796 of sacrifices in the strict sense of the word,
 798 but only representative people at the sacrifice.
 For the Khasi live under a matriarchy. With a
 sharpness of logic and with thoroughness they
 have probably developed and put into effect as a
 social organization the most beautiful pattern
 of a matriarchy of anyone up to today. The
 mother is the head of the family, the only tie
 that gives the family unity; she is the sole
 possessor and sole owner of all property, and
 inheritance is only possible through her. The
 father has no right to the relationship of the
 children. These belong only to the maternal
 line. Even his ashes will not rest finally be-
 side those of his wife or children, but in the
 grave of his mother. Whatever the father may
 earn or save does not belong to his children,
 but returns to the maternal line. It is not
 surprising that with such views it is also the
 mother who has all the spiritual power. And
 in reality she is in complete possession of the
 highest spiritual power. It is her duty to

2. The matriarchy, p. 10... Analysis

- 782 preserve the customs of the family or sib; she
 • 676 must see to it that the ancient domestic customs
 793 of the household sacrifices are truly preserved;
 it is her duty, to keep the inherited ceremonies
 of the sacrifices pure and to hand them down
 conscientiously to the descendants. Therefore
 she has to arrange for the necessary sacrificial
 materials; she must prepare everything; she is
 the only one who must fast before the offering
 of many a sacrifice; she gives the order for the
 sacrifice, and she should also have to perform
 it herself.

But this does not happen. In reality no
 woman offers the sacrifice herself. (4) She is

4. With the exception of the secret
nothing about which, see later.

[404] represented by a male person. But he must be
 related to her on the maternal side. Usually a
 maternal uncle (kni) represents her. Such
 representation by a relative is always necessary,
 whether it be for a public or a private sacrifice.
 But not merely the degree of relationship must
 lie in the feminine line; there is still something
 else that must be observed for each sacrifice.
 Even though the duties of the sacrificers and
 their methods of sacrificing are very different
 and are arranged according to the customs and
 inherited usages in the family or in the sib
 or in the state or community, yet in one point
 they are all similar: namely, all the sacrificers
 must be assisted by a woman during the perform-
 ance of the services referred to. She is simply
 called ka lyngdoh (the priestess). [41] Be-
 cause the man must function in her name and he
 is only her representative at the sacrifice,

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Gurdon (5) believes that his ka lyngdoh is with-

5. Gurdon, The Khasi, loc. cit.

out doubt a holdover from that time of the matriarchy in which a priestess also performed the sacrifices herself.

b) The Public and Ceremonial Introduction as a Lyngdoh.

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How does a person become a lyngdoh?¹ This question can also not be answered so easily. This is very different in the different districts. In general it may be assumed that the lyngdoh arise from the practice of household (private) sacrifices. Since it is the duty of the woman to watch over the sacrificial ceremonies, she will introduce one of her sons to the rite of performing sacrifices that is peculiar to the family, so that he will be able to occasionally offer the sacrifice in the prescribed manner or in case of need (sickness, death, misfortune). But because the maternal uncle is usually called upon for the sacrifices, the son who has learned to offer sacrifices will have little chance to practise this art in his own family, but rather among his maternal relatives. And the other way around, people from there who know how to offer sacrifices will be called into this household. In this way the man who offers sacrifices becomes known in the neighborhood. If he has luck with his arrangements and if success crowns his efforts, the news will spread that he is an experienced sacrificer whom the spirits obey and that he knows how to seek them out, to drive them away, or to propitiate them, as the case requires. Thus it happens that such a man is called upon again and again to offer sacrifices, *[See Sacrificer - Analyst]*

more than a thousand of them who have been converted to the Hindu religion. ¹⁶²
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This group of people possesses the possibility of expansion, since they have at their disposal within the area of the Khasi and Jaintia Mountains a territory of 6,022 English square miles, with only 40 persons per square mile. Although wide areas are not built up and the system of shifting fields prevents the full utilization of the land, it is still true that with this small population figure by far the largest part of the whole population (200,781) is dependent on agriculture; trade and manufacturing only play a subordinate part. [311]

With regard to the division of the sexes, the two large religions of Assam, Hinduism and Mohammedanism, show the same proportion as in the rest of India, a lesser number of women than men. But among the Khasi the women are more numerous than the men. In the Brahmaputra valley with its greater Hindu population there are only 892 women for every 1,000 men; in the Surma valley, with a greater Moslem element, there are 937. But the situation is reversed among the Khasi, where there is a surplus of 74 women for every thousand men. The position of the women is basically different among this people. It is based on the customs and usages of maternal rights that prevail among them, which are predominantly based on possession and which find honorable expression in possession. ⁵⁶²
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1. Property Rights in the Family Property.

The great principle which governs property among the Khasi, is that all family property rests in the hands of the women. /128: A/ /Fig. 1. Khasi Girls and Women with their Carrying Baskets. Fig. 2. An Old Clan Mother in the Village Laitumkhra. / /128: B/ /Fig. 3. At the Oracle of Egg Throwing/. Fig. 5. Khasi Girls and Men in Festive Dance Clothing. / /128: C/ /Fig. 4. A Group of Synteng/ /128: D/ Fig. 6. A Holy Grove and Part of the Village Raliang/ /129/ of the women and not of the man. The man can never be the owner of family property, and it can never be transferred to him. He may perhaps acquire some property through his own industry and work, but even that will pass into feminine hands by the path of inheritance. The concept of family is not as narrowly drawn here as in our country. This is a question of the clan-family, the clan. The head of it is always the youngest daughter, who, even when she has become old, bears the honorable name ka barit in the Jaintia Mountains, and in the Khasi Mountains ka khadduh, the last, the youngest. Around her gather her nearest blood relatives, brothers and sisters, and children. For example let ⁴²¹
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613 us take such a clan mother with the name Ka Sing Lau. She has two
 596 sons and five daughters, and in addition two brothers and two sisters
 who are all married. Also each of the five daughters and two sisters
 has four children. These forty-six people live with the clan mother
 and form the family clan of the Lau. To these we also add the sons
 [592] and brothers, the nephews and grandsons, but not their children. The
 latter have nothing to do with the family Lau but belong to the family
 clan of their wives, live with that clan and are counted in it. Like-
 wise neither the husband of Ka Sing Lau, nor the husbands of the vari-
 ous daughters, sisters, nieces, and granddaughters belong here. They
 are all counted with their own clans, live and work with them accord-
 ing to Khasi custom, and only visit their wives occasionally perhaps
 after dark.

621 The entire clan-family of Lau is housed in 5 or 6 huts, which all
 351 stand next to each other in a semicircle or are built one above the
 other on the slope of a hill, according to the character of the land. A
 [241] garden frequently surrounds them in which maize, sweet potatoes,
 potato-like roots of Soh-ot and Schrut, bananas and, on the southern
 slopes of the Khasi Mountains, also coffee, pineapples, and other
 fruits are cultivated. A circle of bamboo cane that is so important for
 building purposes, household objects, and /130/ implements surrounds
 the garden and huts. This bamboo cane grows up as thick as an arm
 to a height of 10 or 15 meters and at the same time forms a good pro-
 tection against bad weather. A wall (morscha) of thrown-up earth en-
 closes everything, forming an enclosed farm, prevents unimpeded
 access, and protects cattle and crops from the attacks and devastations
 of wild animals.

423 What is considered the family property of such a clan? Primarily
 it is the land, the gardens, the rice fields, woods, fallow mountain
 and grazing lands. On the southern slopes of the Khasi Mountains there
 [241] are fields for the cultivation of rape, orange groves, laurel groves,
 plantations of betel palms and of pepper leaves which far and wide are
 so highly treasured for betel chewing as a source of pleasure. (2)

2. Cf. Becker, *Im Stromtal des Brahmaputra, /In the River Valley
 of the Brahmaputra/* (Munich, 1923). pp. 357 ff.

[31] Usually there is so much land available that the family-clan can
 nourish itself properly and also increase in number

423 According to its size and wealth a family clan also owns a
 231 corresponding number of cows, oxen, hens, pigs, and goats. Neither
 the milk nor the flesh of the cows is used. They are kept for the

613 bakla); and as long as the expiatory sacrifice, in the form of pigs and
 688 goats, determined by the elders of the family and by the sacrificial
 682 priest (lyngdoh) has not been offered, the sinning member is considered
 excluded from the family and the family sacrifices. But even after
 being accepted again a certain stain still clings to him.

613 But it is also the duty of the clan mother to care for the needs of
 the members of her family clan with regard to food, clothing, and the
 like. She divides the fruits of the harvests according to the needs of
 the individual. She goes or sends to market to trade, to buy, or to
 sell. She takes care of the common purse and even the masculine
 members of the clan have to ask her for money when they wish to
 drink rice liquor or buy clothing. There the clan mother is generous
 [562] rather than niggardly. This dependent relationship of the men is not
 considered unworthy at all or shameful. It is the matriarchal form
 and ancient custom. Nevertheless, the position of the men in the
 family clan is an esteemed one. Even the name they are called by
 has an important sound: Rangbah, Basan (oldest ones, advisers). On
 them falls often the work in the field and wood or the protection of
 the family; bow and arrow are handed to them as cradle gifts. In the
 more important family matters the clan mother consults with them. At
 the giving of the name, during a wedding, a funeral, or cremation the
 clan mother steps almost completely into the background, also during
 quarrels and court hearings before the chief (Doloi) or king (S'iem).
 She is still always influential with her advice, but the actual appear-
 ance, activity and judgments is the business of the men. The smaller,
 [782] everyday sacrifices she performs in the clan hut; but she can also let
 these /135/ be performed by her sons. At larger sacrificial ceremonies
 which are offered by several family clans at the same time, by whole
 [793] villages or even by one of the Khasi states, only the men are active as
 sacrificial priests.

613 With regard to the husbands of the clan mother and of the feminine
 586 members, they are not considered members of the family clan of the
 women at all. They are only considered the begetters. They work and
 live in their own clan, participate in their sacrifices and burial places.
 The father has no further influence in the raising of the children, who
 belong entirely to the clan of the mother. But usually they have no
 obligation, unless the wife and children are impoverished. Even then
 their care comes in second place after that of members of their own
 [593] clan. Nevertheless the husband is honored and is addressed by "Mr."
 (kynrad) by his wife. She would consider it disgraceful to approach
 him impertinently. Where the property of a clan has been dissolved or
 Christian customs introduced, the husband lives and works together with
 his wife and children.

421 it, they have to arrange with the U Kni, who is in this case U Babu of Mawphlang, elder brother of the Myntri, U Mama who represents this clan on the State organisation. Payment is made in money which is distributed to the different houses of the Kur. There is, however, Ri Kynti land of another kind, individual property which can be sold absolutely. It may be noted here that no rent is paid to the State or the British Government for the Ri Raid, Ri Kynti or other lands in Mawphlang, or in general in other Khasi States. The revenue of the State is derived from tolls levied on commodities sold in market places and also from fines and other minor sources.

596 The fundamental social and economic unit among Khasis is therefore the family house and the extended family associated with it; the Kur represents a later stage in its expansion. Marriage sets up new relations but does not disturb this basic structure of Khasi Society.

Sept. 1958] Mukherjee : GROUPINGS AMONG THE KHASIS 209

The primal father and the mother of the members of every clan are respectively known as *U-Parad* (*U-Thawlang*) and *Ka-Meyrad* (*Ka-Iaubei*). 614
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There is a large number of clans among the Khasis and some of the clan names are those of animals and trees. *Shrieh* is monkey, *tham*, a crab, and *dingdoh*, a tree; yet they do not constitute totemic clan organization. The clan names are not even the names of the ancestress. The clans are not ancestral but rather were territorial in nature when the clansmen (*shi-Kur*) used to live in a place having a common land (*ri-kur*) and a clan ossuary (*maubah*) where the bones of the dead clansmen were deposited. 614
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Unlike the clans, the sub-clans (*ka-k'poh*) are ancestral. As for example, in case of the *Siem* clan of the Chera state, it is found that *Ka-Khiem* was the primal ancestress. Her daughter *Ka-Pet* had three daughters, namely, *Ka-Sngi*, *Ka-Lugen*, and *Ka-Kreh* each of whom is regarded as the *Ka-K'poh* (meaning womb) of their respective descendants who are *shi-K'poh* (the members of the same womb). And their names are the names of the three sub-clans of the *siem* clan. 613

The names of the sub-clans of some of the clans as collected from the elderly Khasi women are given below. 613
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CLAN	SUB-CLAN
1. Siem	— sngi ; lugen ; kreh
2. Khongsit	— yin ; phai ; har ; jiram
3. Kharshling	— lew ; mah ; aaynglar ; lynean
4. Lyngdoh	— kaban ; summhil ; kamai
5. Nongrum	— tungan ; tungwi ; syngna ; buhai
6. Khongrymal	— thania ; thani ; barhai ; lai
7. Jaidkhar	— hazi ; haza ; tul ; tula
8. Simpitan	— cil ; mayar ; joel ; emi

Family (*ka-ling*) among the Khasis is the socio-economic and religious unit. Due to matrilocal residence, the structure of the Khasi families assumes a different form. The constituent members are the grandmother, her daughters and their children. But the permanent residents are the youngest daughter (*ka-khadduh*), her husband and daughters. It takes an 596 ●

[Should read: permanent. — Analyst]

- 596 extended form more often when the children of the deceased sisters of *Ka-Khadduh* reside there. This extension is on the mother's side and is affiliated through the extension of mother-child relationship.

Additional members like widower brothers or widowed sisters make the Khasi family a composite one.

In a Khasi family father, mother and her brother are very important. Father who is regarded as *Mynder* (stranger) or *Ushong kha* (begetter), has also the position of *Kynrad* (master) of the house (set-up by him). He is the executive head and the mother is the *de jure* owner of the household.

- 177 Modern conditions and spread of Christianity have greatly
178 affected the Khasi society and changed the Khasi ways of life
604 but have failed to alter the traditional mode of inheritance even
593 among the Christian Khasis. Another important fact which is
[428] apparent in the Khasi families, is the change of the status of
the mother's brother (*Uknis*) in his sister's house. His influence
has greatly been diminished due to clash with *Ka-Khadduh*
(heiress). He has almost lost his control over his sister's
[562] family. This has made the women exert their status to a
danger point. Consequently, some amount of maladjustment in
the relationship system, moral depravity and disintegration
loom large in the family horizon.

- 596 Family is the core of Khasi social organization and the
613 closeness of familial kin with the members of the sub-clan is
due more to the fact that sub-clan owes its development to the
family. A *Shi-K'poh* (member of sub-clan) is a secondary
relative and can easily be approached for any help.

- 614 The functions of the above mentioned social groupings are
as follows :

Clan (*Ka-Kur*)—It regulates marriage. It being a larger non-residential kin group contact between its members is infrequent. The amount of social participation needed on certain level to intensify the relationship among its members falls far short of. But nevertheless, there existed among the members

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[Should read: regarded. — Analyst]

cessation of transaction of money (*kheinsbas*) during the period, compulsory social participation in marriage, household worship, and funeral ritual, and the pride for the privilege in sucession to *siem-ship* (chieftain ship) hold together the inner structure of the society in fulfilling its function.

Family (*Ka-iing*) — The functions of family centre round the :

1. performance of basic religious rites,
2. management and inheritance of family property,
3. maintenance of social relations with the kin of *ka-k'poh* and *ka-kur*,
4. protection of familial kin.

From the above discussions it may be inferred that the social groupings of the Khasis function in different dimensions and make the individuals aware of their duties, and obligations towards each other. In the process of socialization and enculturation of the individual they learn that the individuals, the different social groups and the community at large are inseparable.

Even from infancy a boy is infused with the idea that family comes first in regard, sub-clan second, and clan third. The kin of the family are primary relatives, and those of the sub-clan and the clan are secondary and tertiary respectively. One bow and three arrows given by a father to his son in his naming ceremony (*jerkhun*) symbolise their relationships with the three social groups. With the first arrow man has to fight for *shi-ling* (members of the same family) and *shi-k'poh* (members of the same sub-clan), with the second for his *shi-kur* and with the third for the state.